

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## STUDY DETERMINES LEAST PAINFUL TONSILLECTOMY METHOD

DALLAS — November 24, 1993 — A surgeon at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas believes he has cleared up some controversy regarding one of the most common, yet most debated, medical procedures.

"So many practitioners are doing tonsillectomies; they have a lot of experience and are comfortable with their own techniques," said Dr. Joseph Leach, assistant professor of otorhinolaryngology at UT Southwestern. "Yet there's controversy over using steroids, antibiotics, anesthetic agents injected into the tonsils before surgery, and controlling bleeding. None of these questions was answered in the literature."

Leach designed a study to find the best method for performing tonsillectomies. "One of my goals was to remove some of the mythology surrounding tonsillectomies," Leach said. His results, co-authored by Dr. Scott Manning, UT Southwestern associate professor of otorhinolaryngology, and Dr. Steven Schaefer, a former UT Southwestern faculty member, were published in the June issue of *Laryngoscope*.

Leach's study compared two methods of tonsillectomy: one using electrocautery to remove the tonsils and seal blood vessels using an electric current and one using a "sharp" method with a scalpel to slice through connective tissue and a wire snare to remove the tonsil. In 28 patients undergoing tonsillectomies, one tonsil was removed with one method, the other with the second method. Surgeons noted the amount of bleeding during surgery, and patients were asked to rate their pain and bleeding following the surgery.

Most patients noticed less pain on the side where the "sharp" method was used. Differences in bleeding and other complications were insignificant although the "sharp" method produced slightly more bleeding.

"My own recommendation is that the sharp technique with knife and snare is better in the average patient," Leach said. "In patients with bleeding disorders or with limited blood volume, as in a small child, then the cautery would be best."

Leach presented his research at the 95th annual meeting of the American Laryngological, Rhinological and Otological Society Inc. Although the profession as a whole has yet to come to a consensus on the best method of tonsillectomy, he said, "I was able to give some hard data that supports my view."

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